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cient data upon which to work, and through which to arrive at the most satisfactory results.

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY. By Elizabeth Barrett Browning. C. S. Francis & Co., New York.

Mrs. BROWNING, an Englishwoman, happens to be in Italy while the French are assisting the Italians in forming a nationality, and she witnesses events, hears opinions, and judges of them liberally as women generally do, when they really know what they are about. She casts aside the prejudice of an insular mind, and in a book of verse sounds poetic praises, apologizing for, and even exalting Napoleon—a bugbear to her nation. After having given vent to a blessing she must curse a little, and so writes a curse to accompany the pœans of praise. The curse is not so ambiguous as not to have her country people take it to themselves, because, no doubt, conscience pricked them to it. Maledictions, direct and indirect, greet her from the land of her birth, and she hears “from the summits of love a curse” in turn. What does the lady do but play the part of a poetical Pickwick, and authorize a statement to the effect that the curse she wrote was not meant for her dear brothers and sisters in England, but for her dear cousins in America, “over the western sea.” She finds that praising Frenchmen for helping a nation to free itself is more than Englishmen will put up with, to say nothing of a traitorous curse, and so the poetess makes America the scapegoat offering to the wounded pride of those she has offended in blessing enemies. We are no admirers of Mrs. Browning’s poetry as a whole, but like it in parts, as we do occasional pictures of subjects that ought never to be painted. She has ability, but in our judgment it is rarely wisely applied. This little book is equally contemptible and instructive, the first, for the usual display of English inconsistencies, the second for its value as evidence against English prejudice. It is furthermore entertaining to one who enjoys verbal twistings and metrical ingenuity. We append one of the short poems:

THE DANCE.

You remember down at Florence our Cascine,
Where the people on the feast-days walk and drive,
And, through the trees, long-drawn in many a green way,
O’er-roofing hum and murmur like a hive,
The river and the mountains look alive?

You remember the piazzone there, the stand-place
Of carriages a-brim with Florence Beauties,
Who lean and melt to music as the band plays,
Or smile and chat with some one who a-foot is,
Or on horseback, in observance of male duties?

’Tis so pretty in the afternoons of summer,
So many gracious fages brought together!
Call it rout, or call it concert, they have come here,
In the floating of the fan and of the feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine weather.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays (because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every carriage-door;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

And last season, when the French camp had its station
In the meadow-ground, things quickened and grew gayer
Through the mingling of the liberated nation
With this people; groups of Frenchmen everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly . . . “who was fair.”

Then the noblest lady present took upon her
To speak nobly from her carriage for the rest;
“Pray these officers from France to do us honor
By dancing with us straightway.” The request
Was gravely apprehended as addressed.

And the men of France, bareheaded, bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to the space
Which the startled crowd had rounded for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in his face,
Not presuming, through the symbol, on the grace.

There was silence in the people: some lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music, at a glance;
And the daughters of our princes, thus assembled,
Stepped the measure with the gallant sons of France.
Hush! it might have been a Mass, and not a dance.

And they danced there till the blue that overskied us
Swooned with passion, though the footing seemed sedate;
And the mountains, heaving mighty hearts beside us,
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to dilate,
And touch the holy stone where Dante sate.

Then the sons of France, bareheaded, lowly bowing,
Led the ladies back where kinsmen of the south
Stood, received them;—till, with burst of overflowing
Feeling . . . husbands, brothers, Florence’s male youth,
Turned, and kissed the martial strangers mouth to mouth.

And a cry went up, a cry from all that people!
You have heard a people cheering, you suppose,
For the Member, mayor . . . with chorus from the steeple?
This was different: scarce as loud, perhaps (who knows?)
For we saw wet eyes around us ere the close.

And we felt as if a nation, too long borne in
By hard wrongers, comprehending in such attitude
That God had spoken somewhere since the morning,
That men were somehow brothers, by no platitude,
Cried exultant in great wonder and free gratitude.

LYRICS AND IDYLS. By Edmund Clarence Stedman. Charles Scribner, New York.

UNTIL the appearance of “The Diamond Wedding,” we had no knowledge of this author, and clever as that performance was, we did not know that better things lay behind it. The Diamond Wedding is wisely placed last in the book before us, and it is of the poems that precede it which dwarf its merit that we have to speak. “Lyrics and Idyls” brings to mind Wordsworth, Tennyson, Præd, and Hood, who all seem to have served the author for models, if we may be allowed to judge by various styles of metre employed by him, that remind one of these poets. Mr. Stedman, however, is not a mere imitator. With a command of language, and an ear for rhythm, which enables him to try all the forms of verse quite successfully, he adds good natural taste, good feeling, and that which cannot be imitated, original dramatic power. “Bohemia,” for instance, the first poem in the book, is a graceful composition; it breathes a healthy, genial atmosphere of enjoyment, on gipsy principles, enlivened with humor, toned with a few touches of tenderness and pathos. The following stanzas embody some of the merits of the poem:

On either side the travelled way,
Encamped along the sunny downs,
The blithesome, bold Bohemians lay;
Or hid, in quaintly-gabled towns,

At smoke-stained inns of musty date,
And spider-haunted attic nooks
In empty houses of the great,
Still smacking of their ancient state—
Strewn round with pipes and moldy books,
And robes and buskins over-worn,
That well become the careless scorn
And freedom of Bohemia.

For, loving Beauty, and, by chance,
Too poor to make her all in all,
They spurn her half-way maintenance,
And let things mingle as they fall;
Dissevered from all other climes,
Yet compassing the whole round world,
Where'er are jests, and jousts at rhymes—
True love, and careless, jovial times—
Great souls by jilting Fortune whirled—
Men that were born before their day,
Kingly, without a realm to sway,
Yet monarchs in Bohemia;

And errant wielders of the quill;
And old-world princes, strayed afar,
In thread-bare exile chasing still
The glimpses of a natal star;
And Woman—taking refuge there
With woman's toil, and trust, and song,
And something of a piquant air
Defiant, as who must and dare
Steer her own shallop, right or wrong:
A certain noble nature schools,
In scorn of smaller mincing rules,
The maidens of Bohemia.

* * *
And once we stopped a twelve-month, where
Five-score Bohemians began
Their scheme to cheapen bed and fare,
Upon a late-discovered plan;
"For see," they said, "the sum how small
By which one pilgrim's wants are met!
And if a host together fall,
What need of any cash at all?
Though how it worked I half forget,
Yet still the same old dance and song
We found—the kindly, blithesome throng
And joyance of Bohemia.

Thus onward through the Magic Land,
With varying chance. But once there past
A mystic shadow o'er our band,
Deeper than Want could ever cast,
For, oh, it darkened little eyes!
We saw our youngest darling die—
Then robed her in her palmer's guise,
And crossed the fair hands pilgrim-wise,
And, one by one, so tenderly,
Came Ambrose, Sibyl, Ralph, and Rose,
Strewing each sweetest flower that grows
In the wildwoods of Bohemia.

But last the Poet, sorrowing, stood,
Above the tiny clay, and said:
"Bright little Spirit, pure and good,
Whither so far away hast fled?
Full soon thou tryest that other sphere:

Whate'er is lacking in our lives
Thou dost attain; for Heaven is near,
Methinks, to pilgrims wandering here,
As to that one who never strives
With fortune—has not come to know
The pride and pain that dwell so low
In valleys of Bohemia."

We have no space to quote the whole of "The Freshet," a New England idyl, and a fine descriptive poem. We confine our extracts to a portrait:

I fell in, there,
With Gilbert Ripley, once my chum at Yale.
Poor Gilbert groaned along a double year—
Read, spoke, boxed, fenced, rowed, trod the foot-ball
ground—
Loving the college library more than Greek,
His meerschaum most of all. But when we came
Together, gathered from the breathing-time
They give the fellows while the dog-days last,
He found the harness chafe; then grew morose,
And kicked above the traces—going home,
Hardly a Junior, but a sounder man,
In mind and body, than a host, who win
Your baccalaureate honors. There he stayed,
Half-tired of bookmen, on his father's farm,
And gladly felt the plough-helve. In a year
The old man gave his blessing to the son,
And left his life, as 'twere his harvest field,
When work was over. Gilbert hugged the farm,
Now made his own, besides a pretty sum
In good State Sixes; partly worked the land,
With separate theories for every field,
And partly led the student-life of old,
Mouthing his Shakspeare's ballads to himself
Among the meadow-mows; or, when he read
I' the evening, found a picture of his bull,
Just brought from Devon, sleek as silk, loom in
Before his vision. Thus he weighed his tastes,
Each against each, in happiest equipoise.
The neighbor farmers seeing he had thrift
That would not run to waste, and pardoning all
Beyond their understanding, wished him well.

If we are not presuming, we would suggest that Mr. Stedman keep his muse clear of modern political heroes and any other real personage whose name or career is conspicuous, because in everybody's mouth; it would be as well also to avoid Hamlet-like soliloquies and musings on psychological mysteries. Such matters in poetry had better be left to the giants. Every poet does best who creates his own figures and their setting, without entering the minds of other poets, and Mr. Stedman is abundantly able to be original. We would furthermore recommend him to avoid the idealistic cant (traces of which are perceptible in his poems) that one encounters in pulpits and newspapers, passing for patriotism, religion, and philosophy. This cant is gradually getting to be the same stuff, in relation to genuine feeling and thought, as the chivalric nonsense of Don Quixote; it bears about the same relation to true sentiment, and a very little knowledge and study makes it apparent. We confess it is difficult to stem the torrent, but it is, nevertheless, a duty to do so.